

Bull Trout Draft Recovery Plan and proposed Critical Habitat

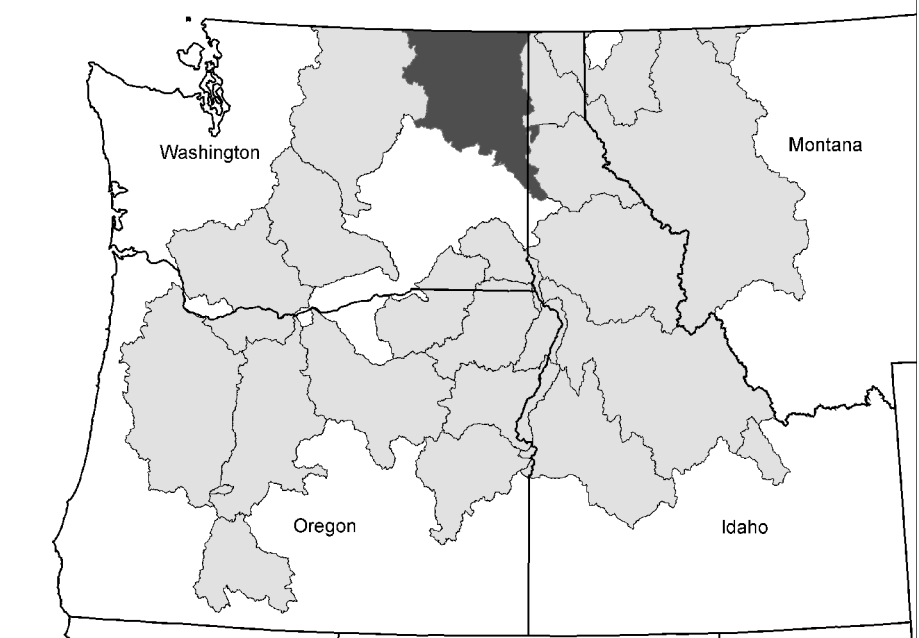
Northeast Washington Recovery Unit (CHAPTER 23)

What areas are included in the Northeast Washington Recovery Unit?

This unit encompasses the main stem of the Columbia River and all its tributaries from the Chief Joseph Dam to the Canadian border; the Spokane River and its tributaries upstream to Post Falls Dam; and the Pend Oreille River and its tributaries from the Canadian border upstream to Albeni Falls Dam. There is one core area in this recovery unit, the Pend Oreille River and its tributaries between Albeni Falls and Boundary Dams. One local population of bull trout was identified by the recovery team within the Le Clerc Creek, WA complex.

How much of the area is proposed as critical habitat?

The critical habitat proposed in the Northeast Washington Recovery Unit is entirely above the Chief Joseph Dam on the Columbia River. The Sanpoil, Spokane, Kettle, and Colville Rivers are included the critical habitat unit, but at this time only the Pend Oreille River Basin is being proposed for critical habitat designation, and comprises approximately 2



percent of the total recovery unit.

The Pend Oreille River Basin encompasses 691,200 acres, of which approximately 58 percent is public land managed by the USFS (Colville National Forest); 4 percent is State land, 1 percent is Tribal land, and 37 percent private lands. Of the approximately 2,208 miles of tributary streams that occur in the Pend Oreille River Critical Habitat Subunit, 158.8 miles in eight main tributaries are proposed for bull trout critical habitat, as well as approximately 73.1 miles of the Pend Oreille River from Boundary Dam to Albeni Falls Dam, for a total 231.9 miles of proposed critical habitat. In

addition, a total of 2,880 acres of lake surface area is also proposed that is comprised of Sullivan Lake and several other ponds and reservoirs.

Who developed the draft Bull Trout Recovery Plan and critical habitat proposal?

The draft recovery plan for bull trout was developed through the collaboration of Federal, State, Tribal and private biologists working with representatives of local watersheds, private landowners and industry and conservation organizations. A total of 24 local recovery unit teams contributed to the development of the draft recovery plans for each of the recovery units. These recovery unit teams

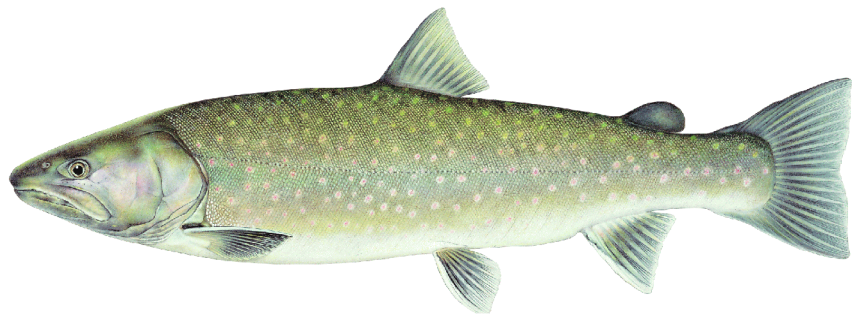
included experts in biology, hydrology and forestry, as well as natural resource users and stakeholders with interest and knowledge of bull trout and the habitats they depend on for survival. The critical habitat proposal was based in large part on information developed by the recovery unit teams and supplemented with even more recent information on the current distribution and habitat characteristics of the species.

What is the relationship between the draft Bull Trout Recovery Plan and the critical habitat proposal?

The draft recovery plan and critical habitat proposal are closely linked. The information developed by the recovery unit teams, and the science underlying that information, are the basis for the critical habitat proposals. However, critical habitat is designed to provide for the conservation of a species by identifying those areas essential for conservation and requiring special management, whereas a recovery plan is a much larger blueprint providing guidance for the eventual recovery and de-listing of a species.

Who would be affected by recovery efforts and a critical habitat designation?

A recovery plan is advisory only and carries no regulatory authority. It is the Fish and Wildlife Service's estimation of the actions necessary for the recovery of the species. Agencies, communities or individuals are encouraged to



take voluntary actions described in the recovery plan to benefit bull trout.

The primary effect of a critical habitat designation is that Federal agencies are required to consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service on actions they carry out, fund, or authorize that might affect critical habitat. It is important to note that in most cases, this is already occurring under the section 7 interagency consultation requirements of the Endangered Species Act. Non-Federal entities, including private landowners, that may also be affected could include, for example, those seeking a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit under the Clean Water Act to build an in-water structure, those seeking Federal approval to discharge effluent into the aquatic environment, or those seeking Federal funding to implement private property improvements, where such actions affect the aquatic environment that has been designated as critical habitat. But again, in most cases where this link between activities on private lands and Federal funding, permitting, or authorization exists,

consultation under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act is already occurring.

A critical habitat designation does not have any effect on non-Federal entities when there is not a Federal nexus. For example, swimming, boating, fishing, farming, ranching, or any of a range of activities normally conducted by a landowner or operator of a business not involving Federal funding, permitting, or authorization in order to occur would not be affected.

How was the draft recovery plan for each unit developed?

Recovery units were delineated based on the biology of the species and considerations for paralleling existing State conservation and fisheries management frameworks wherever possible. Recovery teams incorporated existing State conservation processes to the degree possible, depending on the degree to which they had been developed (for example, the Montana Bull Trout Restoration Plan, the State of Idaho's Bull Trout Conservation Plan, the State of Washington's Statewide Strategy to Recover Salmon

and the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds).

What is the status of bull trout in the Northeast Washington Recovery Unit?

Bull trout in this area were listed in 1998 as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The local population that has been identified is probably a combination of resident and migratory fish. It is likely that historic distribution of bull trout was more expansive than currently observed and likely migrated seasonally from Lake Pend Oreille downstream to Pend Oreille River tributaries to spawn and rear. Bull trout probably also used the Pend Oreille River mainstem for feeding and overwintering. While bull trout have been documented in other areas in the recovery unit (Spokane River, Onion Creek, Big Sheep Creek, Deadman Creek, Boulder Creek and Lake Roosevelt), more research is needed to determine how these areas would contribute to recovery.

What are the threats to bull trout in the Northeast Washington Recovery Unit?

Threats to bull trout in this recovery unit include habitat degradation, blockage of migratory corridors, poor water quality and past fisheries management practices, such as the introduction of non-native species.

What are the recovery goals and objectives?

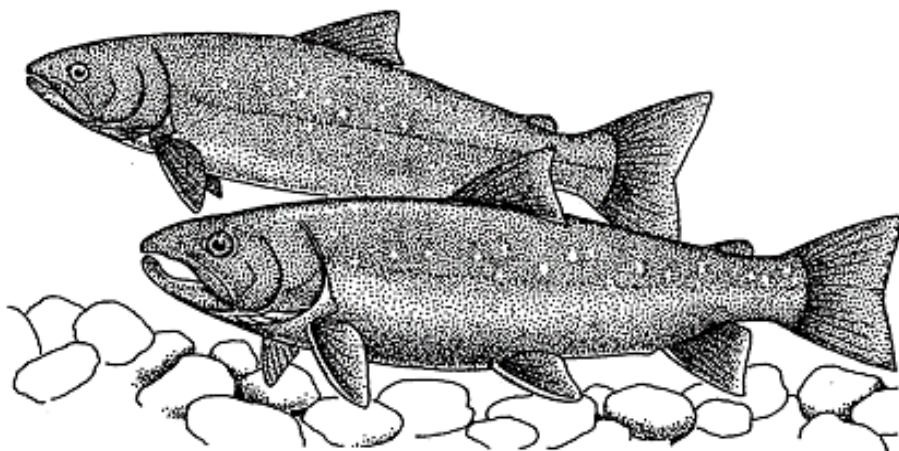
The goal of the bull trout recovery plan is to ensure the long-term persistence of self-sustaining, complex interacting groups of bull trout distributed across the species' range so that the species can be delisted. To recover bull trout in the Northeast Washington Recovery Unit, the following objectives have been identified:

- Maintain current distribution of bull trout and restore distribution in previously occupied areas within the recovery unit.
- Maintain stable or increasing trends in abundance of bull trout
- Restore and maintain suitable habitat conditions for all bull trout life stages.
- Conserve genetic diversity and provide opportunity for genetic exchange

What are the criteria for measuring recovery?

Recovery will be measured according to four criteria: distribution, abundance, population trends and connectivity in the watershed. The recovery plan includes specific, quantifiable standards for each of these criteria.

- **Distribution criteria** will be met when bull trout are distributed among at least nine local populations in the Pend Oreille core area.
- **Abundance criteria** will be met when estimated abundance of bull trout among all local populations in the Pend Oreille core area is between 1,575 and 2,625 migratory adults. More research is needed to determine recovery criteria for resident fish.
- **Trend criteria** will be met when adult bull trout in the core area exhibit a stable or increasing trend for at least two generations (10 years) at or above the recovered abundance level.



- **Connectivity criteria** will be met when specific barriers to bull trout migration in the recovery unit have been adequately addressed. This includes fish passage issues at Albeni Falls, Box Canyon and Boundary dams.

What actions will be necessary to recover bull trout in the Northeast Washington Recovery Unit?

Actions to recover bull trout in this unit are arranged in a tiered manner and generally consist of enhancing habitat, improving water quality and restoring stream connectivity and opportunities for migration and genetic exchange among local bull trout populations. For this recovery unit other actions include: developing a comprehensive fisheries management plan for Boundary Canyon and Box Canyon reservoirs; evaluating and preventing poaching and incidental catch mortality; and evaluating the Kalispel Tribe's fish stocking program.

How long will recovery take?

A recovery plan is advisory only and carries no regulatory authority; therefore it is difficult to determine how long it will take to recover bull trout in the Northeast Washington Recovery Unit. However, given our best estimate of what government agencies and others might do, it could take three to five bull trout generations (15 to 25 years) before identified threats to the species can be significantly

reduced and bull trout can be considered eligible for delisting.

How much will recovery cost?

Estimating the cost of recovery is difficult and complex, due to many variables and unknowns. However, the Northeast Washington Recovery Unit team has estimated that recovery could cost about \$29.7 million spread over 15 to 25 years. This includes estimates of expenditures by local, Tribal, State and Federal governments and by private business and individuals. The estimates are attributed to bull trout conservation but other aquatic species also will benefit. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is soliciting comments from the public on the estimated costs.

How can I obtain copies of the documents?

The documents, along with maps, fact sheets, photographs and other materials may be found on the Pacific Region's website at <http://species.fws.gov/bulltrout>

How can I comment?

The Service will be accepting comments, beginning November 29, 2002, on its draft recovery plan for bull trout in the Columbia and Klamath river basins and in the St. Mary-Belly River Basin in Montana. Comments on the draft recovery plan will be accepted for 90 days, until February 27, 2003. Comments on the draft recovery plan may be mailed to the U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service, Snake River Basin Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, ID 83709; faxed to 208-378-5262, or sent via e-mail to: fw1srbocomment@fws.gov

Beginning November 29, 2002, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will accept comments from the public on the agency's proposal to designate critical habitat for the Columbia River and Klamath River distinct population segments of bull trout. Comments will be accepted for 60 days, until January 28, 2003. Comments on the critical habitat proposal may be submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Regional Office, attn: John Young, Bull Trout Coordinator, 911 N.E. 11th Avenue, Portland Oregon 97232; faxed to 503.231.6243 or e-mailed to: R1bulltroutCH@r1.fws.gov

In addition, a series of public meetings and public hearings will be held in January. Times and locations will be posted on our Bull Trout website at <http://species.fws.gov/bulltrout> and publicized in local newspapers.

***This is only a brief summary.
Please see full draft recovery plan and critical habitat proposal for complete details.***